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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Saber Strike 2011 kicks off in Latvia (MAIN)

21st TSC, 16th Sust. Bde. support cooperative training exercise (DROP)

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16th Sust. Bde. and 21st TSC Public Affairs

ADAZI TRAINING AREA, Latvia — The flags of four nations bonded by the war in Afghanistan waved side by side during the opening ceremony of Saber Strike 11, at Adazi Training Area Oct. 18.

Close by soldiers zeroed weapons, improved training sites and conducted training reconnaissance – marking the beginning of several weeks of multinational training aimed at improving interoperability and preparing Latvian, Estonian, Lithuanian and U.S. troops for upcoming deployments in support of the International Security Assistance Forces in Afghanistan.

Soldiers from the 21st Theater Sustainment Command and its 16th Sustainment Brigade are participating in Saber Strike 11, which will run through Oct. 29.

Saber Strike is the first of what will be an ongoing cooperative training effort between these four partner nations and is intended to increase the combat readiness of forces preparing to deploy in support of the ISAF, according to Col. Keith Sledd, Saber Strike 2011 exercise co-director and commander of the 16th Sust. Bde.

The exercise includes a Command Post Exercise, a Field Training Exercise and Situational Training Exercises that are aimed at training the participating countries to operate more effectively together. The tasks trained in this exercise are specifically designed to prepare the troops for operations in Afghanistan and include Improvised Explosive Device defeat training, convoy and patrol operations, and cordon and search operations.

In addition to Soldiers from the 21st TSC and 16th Sust. Brig., there are Soldiers from the 172nd Infantry Brigade, 56th Stryker Brigade Combat Team and other U.S. Army in Europe units participating in Saber Strike 11. The exercise is not only a training

opportunity, but also a sign of the importance of the relationship among the participating nations, said Sledd.

“Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia have each contributed significantly to the International Security Assistance Forces in Afghanistan as well as other international operations over the years. Each nation is a key regional partner, and this exercise reflects the great strategic partnership and close relationship that the U.S. Army has with each of the Baltic state militaries,” said Sledd.

Saber Strike 2011 offers a great opportunity for the army of each nation, according to Sledd.

“The Saber Strike exercise benefits each nation involved by improving interoperability between each nation’s military, exercising multi-national command and control, improving our joint operational capabilities, and strengthening our regional partnerships,” said Sledd. “Each nation reaps significant benefits from (these) cooperative training efforts by improving the abilities of regional partners.”

Soldiers participating in the exercise have already found out that despite the language barrier and minor cultural differences, the soldiers from each nation really have a lot in common, and training with these new comrades in arms gives them a fresh perspective on the way they do many things.

“We have the same goals, but it’s nice to hear a different point of view as opposed to, ‘we always did it this way. This is the way we’ve always done it. This is the way it’s written. This is doctrine. This is regulation,’” said Sgt. 1st Class Sean Cook, a native of South Boston, Mass., and an ammunition specialist for the 23rd Ordnance Company, 18th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 16th Sust. Bde.

The Latvians are very user friendly. They like to change things up and try different things, and it really makes for a better experience as an overall training example,” said Cook.



The U.S. Army and the Baltic States conducted an opening ceremony for Saber Strike 11 at the Adazi Training Area Oct. 18. Saber Strike 11 is a multinational forces partner building exercise. (Photo by Spc. Amber Stephens)



Soldiers from Latvia and U.S. Army Europe's 172nd Infantry Brigade train together Oct. 18. The two countries shared tactics on how to enter and clear buildings during Saber Strike 11, a multinational exercise designed to help bolster the relationship between the Baltic partners and the U.S. Army and improve interoperability among the countries. (Photo By Spc. Robert. J. Holland)